

# Nicotine and Smoke Health Information

Very simply, nicotine is the chemical in tobacco that makes a person addicted to using tobacco. *All* kinds of tobacco can cause addiction: cigarette tobacco, cigar tobacco, pipe tobacco, chewing tobacco, and snuff.

## It's a Fact

Nicotine in all forms of tobacco can cause addiction.

No matter if tobacco is smoked, chewed, or sniffed, nicotine can be absorbed into the bloodstream. Nicotine in the blood begins affecting the brain within only seven seconds.

## Why Nicotine Is Addictive

Nicotine acts as a stimulant in the body, that is, it temporarily speeds up some body functions. In fact, it affects the same parts of the brain as cocaine, just not as much. After the stimulation feeling wears off the person using tobacco experiences mild depression and fatigue. As a result, tobacco users want to use more nicotine, to overcome the depression and fatigue.

Although the amount of nicotine in the body is less *after* finishing a cigarette, pipe, or smokeless tobacco, regular—everyday—use of these products causes nicotine levels to build up. And that means the body is exposed to nicotine 24 hours a day.

## What Is in Smoke

Cigarette smokers—and anyone exposed to secondhand smoke—breathe in more than 4,000 harmful chemicals. The National Women's Health Information Center created this list of the poisonous chemicals in cigarette, pipe, and cigar smoke:

- **Nicotine:** As addictive as heroin and cocaine, this is a deadly poison.
- **Arsenic:** This is a poison used to kill rats.
- **Ammonia:** This common substance can be found in cleaning products.
- **Cadmium:** This chemical is used in batteries.
- **Methane:** This is a common ingredient in rocket fuel.
- **Butane:** Lighter fluids contain this substance.
- **Carbon monoxide:** This gas is found in car exhaust.

Quitting smoking and avoiding secondhand smoke can help you avoid these dangerous chemicals.

## Sources

- National Cancer Institute. [cis.nci.nih.gov/fact/10\\_16.htm](http://cis.nci.nih.gov/fact/10_16.htm). "Questions and Answers About Cigar Smoking and Cancer." Accessed October 2004.
- The National Women's Health Information Center. [www.4woman.gov/QuitSmoking/howtoquit.cfm](http://www.4woman.gov/QuitSmoking/howtoquit.cfm). "How to Quit Smoking." Accessed October 2004.

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